

# The Freethinking Christians' MAGAZINE.

No. 15.]

MARCH, 1812.

[Vol. 2.

## EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

Whence, but from heaven, could men, unskill'd in arts,  
In diff'rent nations born, in diff'rent parts,  
Weave such agreeing truths? or, how, or why,  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unask'd their pains—ungrateful their advice—  
Starving's their gain, and martyrdom their price!

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

I STILL must express my surprise that none of your deistical correspondents have attempted to answer my questions. Surely, they are plainly stated, and if fallacious admit of a plain and easy answer. These gentlemen are extremely dictatorial in their demands *when they propose questions*, and why are they not as prompt when they are proposed to them? It is indeed urged by one, that all the arguments adduced in these evidences are the same as have been repeatedly urged before, and that there is nothing new in them. Admitting this to be the fact, there can then be no difficulty in answering them; for he will, no doubt, have the assistance of those who have before replied to such arguments. But if this were a justifiable reason why they should not be answered, might we not with equal propriety say, that all the objections which Deists now bring against revealed religion have been frequently urged and as often answered, and are therefore not entitled to any notice? This is a line of conduct we should be ashamed of; and to obviate the necessity of going over the old ground, I have placed the old argument in a new light, and put it on a new ground—one so simple and plain, that it cannot be mistaken by men of common sense, and which requires no great share of talent to refute, if Christianity be false.

In this essay I shall endeavour to bring proof of the resurrection of Jesus; a fact which, if it can be established, must completely destroy all cavilling for the future against the Christian religion. That such a person as Jesus existed and was crucified, even the Jews and Mr. Paine admit; but to put the matter beyond all dispute, we have the authority of Tacitus, the Roman historian, who was born about thirty, and wrote about seventy years, after the death of Jesus. He says, "with this view he

(Nero) inflicted the most exquisite torments on those men who, under the vulgar appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy. *They derived their name and origin from Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius had suffered death by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate.*"\* And Mr. Gibbon says, that "the most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus."† Here then we have established from enemies the important truth, that Jesus did live, and that he was put to death agreeable to the Scripture account of that circumstance. It only remains to prove that the other part, viz. his resurrection, is true also; but this must be established upon other ground, as it is not reasonable to expect the testimony of these men in its favor, whose prejudices and interest it so strongly militated against.

A correspondent in your last number (whom I do not quote by way of answering, as it would be contrary to the plan I have prescribed to myself, but by way of illustrating the subject), proposes a case as analogous to the resurrection of Jesus, and supposes that "a British consul in America writes to his government at home, that, on the first of January 1812, General Washington, who died in December, 1799, and was buried like other people, appeared in the senate-house, and in full congress delivered a most animated speech of three hours and a half, and then as suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared and was seen no more. Now (says he) let any man of sense and information ask himself if he could listen for a single instant to such a tale as this, though sworn to by Aristides and Cato." He then asks, "but why do we resist such a tale as the foregoing? is it not because we regard the settled and inflexible course of nature as furnishing motives of conviction, infinitely superior to those which result from any human testimony whatsoever?" I agree with him, that we could not give credit to the tale he has related, but not for the reasons assigned by him; for, in the first place, we are very imperfectly acquainted with what he calls the settled and inflexible laws of nature; in the second place, because though such a thing had never been heard of before, our present existence, which is equally mysterious, would prove that it was not impossible; "for the Being who gave it us (to use the words of Mr. Paine) can call us again into existence, when and in what manner and form he pleases." The thing, therefore, not being impossible, while I admit the existence of a God, and only being contrary to my little experience of the laws of nature, I could not reject it on such ground; but as

\* Vide Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 2. page 405.

† Ibid, page 407.



all facts of which we cannot be eye-witnesses, depend upon the combination of a variety of circumstances, either to detect their fallacy, or establish their truth—and the more improbable and contrary to our experience they are, the greater need there is for a number of these corroborating circumstances—I should examine it on quite different grounds. I should first enquire if the parties so reporting it were by any means interested in the story; and in this instance I should think it very probable that a government might propagate it for interested or political purposes; and therefore unless I had stronger evidence than he has stated, I of course should reject it. I should next enquire if the persons so reporting were prejudiced in favour of it by previous expectations of such an event—if they were men, under all the circumstances of the case, capable of being deceived themselves, or of dispositions and characters to wish to deceive others; if they exposed themselves to danger and death by the propagating such a story; and if on this story they founded a system that had for its end the promotion of virtue and happiness among mankind, or the contrary? These and a variety of other enquiries I should make, and from the combination of all these circumstances I should draw my conclusion; and I do hope to shew, that every necessary proof a reasonable man can require is connected with the resurrection of Jesus, and that the fact itself is as different, and stands upon as different evidence to the supposed case of General Washington, as a belief in the existence of witches and the shining of the sun at noon-day.

Now, Sir, as it respects the resurrection of Jesus, it is asserted that he died and was buried, and that *God* raised him from the dead the third day, and that he appeared to, and dwelt with his disciples for forty days. Here is no pretension that it originated from the settled and inflexible laws of nature, but by the immediate power of God; and no man will presume to say it is beyond the power of Deity to do such an act. Our only enquiry then is, what reasons have we at this distance of time for believing that he did so act; and the best mode of shewing those reasons will be by taking a view of all the circumstances of the case; and first, those persons who assure us of the fact, also tell us that Jesus constantly declared, before his death, that he should suffer, and rise again on the third day. Even his enemies bore testimony to this in their accusations against him before Pilate; and lest an imposition should be practised upon them, they intreated the Roman governor that a seal and guard should be put over his sepulchre. Here then his death, burial, and pretensions to a resurrection, are publicly recognised by the Jews, and Roman government; and every precaution taken that human foresight

could imagine necessary. But after three days Jesus appears to his disciples alive, and a story is propagated that the disciples stole his body while the soldiers slept. This must evidently be false, as I shall prove; for had such a circumstance happened of the soldiers sleeping on their watch, they would have been put to death. And indeed what ground could there be for believing it to be true? had the disciples such amazing courage, or such a firm belief that their master would rise again, as to engage in such a dangerous enterprize? and even had they so done, what end could it have answered to them? They had followed him because they laboured under the general prejudice of their countrymen, in expecting a temporal deliverer, and seeing the miracles of Jesus, believed that he was the person; and this prejudice they still retained after his resurrection, for they even then ask him (Acts i. 6), "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Of what use then could be his dead body, even had they obtained it? They could not have made it a king; besides which, it is evident that when he was crucified all their courage forsook them, and they fled. But not only had they not courage to steal the body, but they had no inducement, having entirely given up all expectation of his resurrection; so that when the women who had seen Jesus reported it to the apostles (Luke xxiv. 11) their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not; and the two disciples who walked with him to Emmaus declare in the most simple manner their disappointment, by saying to Jesus (Luke xxiv. 18) "art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? and he said unto them, what things? and they said, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him; but we trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." And Thomas, who happened to be absent when Jesus visited his disciples, said, upon hearing of the event, "except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Here then are men, not understanding or believing that Jesus would, or had risen from the dead, charged with the desperate enterprize of breaking open a sepulchre, which was sealed, and guarded by Roman soldiers, aided by the vigilance of never-sleeping bigotry—without any possible motive for such an action, and contrary to all their prejudices and belief. This is impossible in the nature of things, and consequently the body of Jesus must



have been still secure in the sepulchre, or he really was raised from the dead by the power of God; and notwithstanding all their prejudices, they are convinced that Jesus is risen indeed, acknowledge their error, and from cowards and sceptics, become courageous asserters of what they before could not give credit to. I here call upon the Deist to assign an adequate cause for this conviction wrought in their minds under all the circumstances of the case, independent of that which they have assigned, viz. that they had seen him, handled him, eaten and conversed with him, for forty days, so that it was impossible they could be mistaken; and if he cannot do this, then is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus fully established, and the Christian religion must be true.

Having thus secured the body in the sepulchre, by proving that it could not have been stolen by the disciples, and being also sure that the Jews and Romans would not favour the fraud by removing it, let us see what was the conduct of these heretofore cowardly disciples, after being convinced that their master was alive again. And here I will not enter into any argument to shew that they had no interest in the line of conduct they pursued; that will appear evident from the future consequences—I will only shew that they acted like men who were fully satisfied of the fact which they declared to be true, and that they gave their enemies a fair opportunity of detecting their imposture, if it had been such. They did not go to a remote place to propagate it where the means of detection would have been difficult, but into the very city of Jerusalem, where it had taken place; and that they did go to this place first is evident, as all history admits the fact, that whether Christianity be true or false, here it was first planted—they did not publish it in holes and corners, and so as to evade the notice of men in power, but chose the most public places and public occasions for that purpose—they went where, if the death and burial of Jesus was false, every person could contradict them; and where, if the dead body had been stolen, they exposed themselves to punishment for the theft; but they are neither contradicted in the one, nor charged with the other.

All this I allow only proves the fact of the death and burial, and their innocence as to stealing the dead body; but in addition to this, it was the place where the magistrates could detect the falsehood of their story, as to the resurrection of Jesus, by producing the body, or establish the fact of its having been stolen by these men; yet we shall find that neither one or the other is ever attempted. Now let it be observed, that the conduct of the disciples has nothing of fanaticism about it—they do not run and proclaim the fact directly they are convinced of its reality, but patiently wait the fulfilment of a pro-

mise made by Jesus, of their receiving power from on high to fit them for the important undertaking; and not till they have received this power, do they set about engaging in their mission; but no sooner are they thus qualified than they enter the city of Jerusalem, and declare the resurrection of Jesus, not only to the Jewish people, but before the high priest, senate, and the council—they not only declare his resurrection, but charge them with being his murderers. Here then is a sufficient inducement to lead these men to use every means to detect the imposture, and to vindicate their own character; and surely no men ever had it more in their power, admitting that the things which the apostles asserted as facts had been false: but contrary to every thing we know of human nature, and of the practice of men in power under such circumstances, we find them neglecting to bring any proof of the falsehood of the assertions, and contenting themselves with either charging them not to speak any more of it, or else punishing them for so doing—while we see the disciples, who at the crucifixion of Jesus had proved themselves such cowards, and after his resurrection so difficult to be convinced of the fact, with no inducement whatever if the thing was false, acting with a courage that it is impossible for impostors to feign—boldly defying all their threats, charging them to their teeth with being murderers, and insisting that the man whom they had thus put to death, and secured his body with seals and guards, was actually risen from the dead, and notwithstanding all their precautions was no longer in the tomb; for Peter, when questioned concerning a miracle he had performed, said that it was not by his own power or holiness he had done this, but (Acts iii. 13) “the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go; but ye denied the holy one and the just, and desired a murderer to be delivered to you, and killed the prince of life whom God hath raised up, of whom we are witnesses.” Here is no mincing of the matter; this is not the method that impostors pursue to gain converts to their side, but every thing calculated to rouse the indignation of his auditors, to provoke enquiry into the fact, and to produce the strongest inclination to prove the falsehood of the assertion. But what is the effect produced? do they say you are liars and impostors; the man whom you say is living is yet in the tomb; let us go there, and let that determine the fact? No, but like all men who have no better argument, they appeal to the argument of authority and force (Acts iv. 1), “for as they spake to the people the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them (v. 3), and they laid hands on



them, and put them in hold unto the next day ; and then they assemble all the men in power and interrogate them." But even here the Apostles are not intimidated ! they do not alter their story, but boldly repeat the charge of the murder of Jesus, asserting also that God had raised him from the dead, and that they had performed a miracle in his name.

Now what are the steps taken by the council ? do they refer to the sepulchre ? do they produce the dead body which would have settled the business beyond all dispute ? No, but they content themselves with commanding that they should speak no more of these things, and threatening them with punishment if they did. Surely this is not a line of conduct that would have been pursued by men in power, had they known what the Apostles asserted to be false, and that the body was still in their possession. But what is the conduct of the Apostles on this occasion ? do they act like impostors, or like men convinced of the truth of those things they had taught ? Surely no impostors would have acted as they did, for they boldly declare that they act under the authority of God, and say " we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Again, we find (Acts v.) that, when the preaching and miracles of the Apostles had converted great numbers to the faith, the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, and were filled with indignation, and laid them in the common prison ; but on the next day (whether by a miracle or any other cause) they were found at large ! They did not, as impostors would have done, fly from the power of their accusers ; but they enter into the temple, and teach those very things for which they had been imprisoned ; and there they remain till the officers of justice lead them before the council ; and when they had come before the council, the high priest asked them, " did we not strictly command you that ye should teach no more in this name, and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrines, and *intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*" Here, let it be remarked, there is even now no attempt to prove the falsehood of what the Apostles had taught, or to convict them as impostors. They do not say, let us go to the sepulchre, or let the dead body be brought to give the lie to your assertions ; or, admitting the dead body had been stolen, they did not charge the disciples with the theft. Surely, had they been in possession of such proofs, they would not have failed to adduce them ; therefore their not doing it is proof that the body was not in the sepulchre, and that they did not believe the disciples had stolen it. And here let me observe the objection will not avail, that the body was putrified or decayed, as the manner in which Jesus was buried precluded the possibility. He was not put in a grave and covered with earth, but

in a tomb, dug out of a rock, and his body was embalmed ; so that there could not have been the smallest inconvenience in producing it, had it been there. Here again the council acted as men who were conscious that they had no evidence against the persons accused, while the Apostles conducted themselves in a way that must prove to every impartial man they knew that they were right ; for they do not alter their story—they do not court the favour or mercy of their accusers and judges—they do not soften their language ; but “then Peter and the other Apostles (not one but all) answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men : the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, *whom ye slew* and hanged on a tree, and we are his witnesses of these things.” But what effect does this provoking and intrepid conduct produce ? does it call forth any evidence to shew they had been uttering falsehoods ? No, “but they took counsel to slay them ; and then stood up one of the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, and held in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put forth the Apostles.” And what does this great doctor say ? Does he advise them to produce the dead body ? or, knowing it was not then in the sepulchre, does he say let us convict these men of having stole it, and then punish them for the theft ? He does not—he speaks like a man, who, knowing they had no evidence to controvert the fact, would therefore propose the best expedient, under all the circumstances, of ascertaining whether it was true or false ; for after mentioning the rise and fall of several impostors who had pretended to be the Messiah, he says, and “now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone ; for if this council, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found fighting against God.” But, I ask, why leave it to this discussion ? Why not produce the dead body ?—They had taken every precaution to secure it, and if what the Apostles asserted was false, in the sepulchre it must have been at this very time. But without any other reason or evidence adduced by Gamaliel, it is said, “to him they agreed ; and when they had called the Apostles and had beaten them, they commanded that they should speak no more in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”

Thus the council acted like men who had no possible means of disproving the charge of murder brought against themselves, nor the fact of the resurrection ; while the disciples displayed a perseverance and courage that nothing but the strongest conviction could inspire, “for daily in the temple and every house they ceased not to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.”

Here then we have facts, which, if the Apostles were impos-



tors, contradict all the settled and inflexible laws of human nature and of the human mind we know of; for they boldly persist in proclaiming a fact which, if they were impostors, they knew to be a lie (and this at the hazard of their lives), and in the temple and council maintaining the truth of it; and that in a city where they must have known they had the power of falsifying all their assertions, and of exposing their imposture, by simply saying let us go to the sepulchre and identify the body of that man whom you say is not there, but that God has raised him from the dead; while, on the other hand, we find priests and counselors, with every means in their own hands of refuting all these calumnies, and convicting the impostors in the most decided manner, content themselves with remonstrating, with beating, or imprisoning of them; but never once attempting to convict them upon evidence, though that evidence was so compleatly in their power, and although it was of so much importance to their interest and character, that there can be no doubt they would have parted with all they were worth to have convicted them to the satisfaction of the people.

How unlike is this case of the resurrection of Jesus to the story of General Washington. Let that story be accompanied with such circumstances as this is, and then, "let any man of sense and information ask himself, if he could hesitate for a single instant in giving credit to such a tale," though not sworn to, but merely asserted by, twelve poor fishermen of Galilee? Thus then I do not pretend to prove the resurrection of Jesus from its agreement with the laws of nature; but as there is "no Deist that I know of has ever said that God could not raise the dead, or do any other supernatural act," I contend that the agreement or non-agreement of this fact with the laws of nature is not the criterion to determine the truth or falsehood of it; but that if there is such a combination of circumstances to prove that a man was really raised from the dead as to leave no rational ground to doubt its truth, we must either admit that there is some law in nature unknown to us, by which this act took place, or else that God did in this instance act out of, though not in violation of, the usual laws of nature; and to my mind, the evidence on this subject is so clear and decisive, that I confess I do not see how it can possibly be otherwise than true: and I call upon the Deist to bring me one fact so well attested, and connected with such a variety of strong corroborative evidence as this is, that was ever proved to be false.

I have here stated facts and effects, such as appear to me highly satisfactory, and I call upon those who deny the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, to assign adequate causes for them, and particularly for the conduct of the Apostles, who

had seen their master put to death, contrary to their expectation, and in violation of all their prejudices; who had given up every hope of seeing him again, and even were unwilling to believe the fact of his resurrection, when reported to them by those who declared they had seen him; yet in a very few weeks are so convinced of its reality, as to enter the city where the crucifixion took place, and (admitting the resurrection to be false) where the body might be produced to their confusion, and there publicly charging the high priest, council, rulers, and people, with having been the murderers of a man whom they asserted to have risen from the dead; and this, whether true or false, at the hazard of their lives—I say, I call for an adequate cause for such conduct, independent of that which they have assigned, viz. that they had seen, conversed, and eaten with him, and knew him to be the same person who had been put to death. Here is a cause every way adequate to the effect, and if no other can be given, then is the resurrection of Jesus established beyond all possibility of doubt; for what they assert is not like an opinion or sentiment, in which they might be mistaken, but that of which it was impossible they could be deceived; and though many men have laid down their lives for a sentiment they believed to be true, the whole history of man does not furnish us with an instance of men cheerfully laying down their lives to prove the truth of a fact which they knew to be false.

Again, I would ask for an adequate cause for the conduct of the high priest, rulers, and people of the Jews, who, if the testimony of the Apostles was false, submitted to bear the characters of murderers, and to suffer a falsehood to spread all over Jerusalem, when they had such effectual means in their power to have contradicted and prevented it altogether, *by only going to the sepulchre and producing the dead body*. Would the American congress, or any other government, have acted as they did under such charges, if they had known them to be false? Certainly not. The cause, and the only adequate cause which can account for the conduct of these men, is obvious—what the Apostles asserted was true, the body was not there—Jesus was risen indeed, and the Christian religion is true!

I have to apologize for the length of this essay, and what may appear to some tautology; but as my object is not fine writing, but to place the Evidences of Revealed Religion in the strongest and clearest manner possible, those who are benefited by my argument will readily excuse the style, especially as it is a subject which, to be made perspicuous, must necessarily require considerable repetition.

Your's, &c.

CHRISTOPHILUS.



REMARKS ON AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE AND DISCIPLINE  
OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BY R. WRIGHT.

**P**REVIOUS to our noticing this small production, it may be necessary to state who and what the author is. Mr. R. Wright is frequently noticed in a periodical work, called the *Theological Repository*, as the Rev. R. Wright, Unitarian missionary; but if we enquire for further particulars relative to this gentleman, we shall find that a few years ago he was known as a *schoolmaster* and *Christian teacher*, residing at Wisbeach, but occasionally visiting a church in London, under the pastoral care of a William Vidler. At that time he despised any distinction of dress between the teacher and the taught, and would on no account be called *Reverend*. His usual dress was a light coat—this soon degenerated into a blue one; the next step was to cover the buttons; and now we find him dressed in black—no longer the schoolmaster and Christian teacher, but the Rev. R. Wright, Unitarian missionary. Thus the writer of this pamphlet has “become all things to all men,” even in the most corrupt sense of the text. Of course, we cannot help enquiring of whom the sect called Unitarians, by whom this gentleman is appointed missionary, consists—and what are the barriers to its increase—in order to determine the intention of the Rev. R. Wright, Unitarian missionary, in writing this tract.

The Unitarians consist of two parties; the first, men who have long professed the Christian religion from principle, and who, having maintained the right of free enquiry, have by a long series of investigation given up a variety of absurd doctrines, considering them anti-Christian; at the same time contending that a man could not be a Christian unless he united himself to the Christian church, and that in that church high and low, rich and poor, were brethren on an equal footing, and that superior virtue alone demands superior respect. In this class I include those churches which were formerly known as “General Baptists” or “Universalists.” The second class consists of rich men, who are ashamed of the ridiculous fables and stupid dogmas called Christian, yet feel they ought to be religious. But these are too proud to call the poor man brother, and therefore will not join the Christian church, though they wish to be considered as Christians; men who feel they ought to return in acts of kindness a portion of the property they have wrung from the hard earnings of industrious poverty, and therefore, to ease their consciences, they contribute largely to the support of the preachers; who, if thus supported, will benevolently teach men with empty bellies, starving families, and clothed in rags, to practise the

virtues of humility, gratitude, and submission. In this second class also are to be considered men who wish to be thought religious; but who are totally regardless of the principles of morality. These men dare not join a Christian church, because they know they must give up their *vicious propensities*; and therefore they contend a man may be a Christian without joining a body of men called the Christian church. The Rev. R. Wright, therefore, with the same *facility* with which he gave up his profession of schoolmaster, or changed the colour of his raiment, or assumed the title of *Reverend*, or became a Unitarian missionary, suits his principles to his circumstances, and writes the pamphlet we are about to review to reconcile the discordant parties above mentioned.

To endeavour to draw the first class from that union which leads men to know one another, and to watch over each other's conduct, or to draw men from a practice well known among the General Baptist and Universalist churches by the name of "*conference*," or meetings, where the members had an opportunity of enquiring into the principles they professed, and performing their duty by edifying, admonishing, or instructing each other, and in this practically demonstrating the inutility of "Christian ministers." To lead these honest men from such practices, by bewildering the subject of church government (while, on the other hand, the minds of the rich and prophane might be *lulled in security*, so long as they supported the craft of Demetrius and his fellow *labourers*), the reverend gentleman in his introduction states, "it has been taken for granted, that a precise form of church government and discipline, to be maintained in all ages, was laid down by Jesus or his Apostles;" and that his design in this essay is to attempt a removal of the evils arising from this opinion, "at the same time to promote order in Christian societies, and to prevent disunion," &c.; and (page 3) he declares "it is a true maxim that the government and regulations adopted in any organized society should be suited to the nature of that society;" and (p. 4) we read of the privileges of a Christian church, and of the end for which Christians united in such churches, viz. "Their mutual edification," &c. And (p. 10) we are told "officers are necessary." From all these observations, we should be led to suppose a *Christian church* was a *compact organized* body, even in the *reverend writer's opinion*; but on examining his production a little closer, and looking at his definition of the term *church*, we shall soon discover our mistake, for (page 3) he observes — "The word *church* is applicable to an assembly of any kind. It is applied to an assembly either lawfully convened, or come together in a tumultuous manner: see Acts xix. 32, 39, 41, where it is translated assembly. It is applied to any assembly,



or congregation of Christians, as may be seen by examining the New Testament at large. A Christian church is an assembly of persons professing the faith of Christ. In the New Testament, no distinction is made between the *church and assembly or congregation* at large, who unite in Christian worship; *they are identical*. The modern distinction of church and congregation is unauthorized by scripture, has no precedent in the apostolic writings, and involves a solecism."

And did this writer, we would ask, really believe that congregations were, in the primitive times, similar to what are now called congregations, and that as the word *church* signified assembly, therefore every Unitarian congregation, though composed of men of various opinions and characters, is a Christian church? if we read the history of the Acts of the Apostles, we never find any uniting in "Christian worship," but those who had joined themselves in the fellowship of the Christian church, and who gave proof of their sincerity by uniting with a *despised and persecuted body of men*. Does this reverend gentleman mean to say, that the assemblies at Athens, Ephesus, &c. to whom Paul preached (and who certainly bear a strong similitude to what are now called congregations), were "*identical*" with the *Christian church* to which Paul found so much difficulty in joining himself? or with the church assembled by the elders at Ephesus, for the purpose of taking their farewell of Paul? We would ask this man if he has forgot that the Christian church was in the apostle's time a *persecuted church*; that Christians themselves would not admit strangers to their meetings, fearing they might be spies sent to entrap them; while, on the other hand, strangers would not attend them, lest they might be scoffed at or persecuted as Christians? we therefore cannot help thinking the identifying the church and congregation, as intended only to bewilder the honest disciple of Jesus, and to answer the purposes alluded to in our introduction; at the same time, we think the writer has too much knowledge to be deceived himself in this point.

Page 9. The author says "it is evident the Apostles began without any regular plan of discipline. At first the Apostles managed every thing," &c. The whole of this paragraph contradicts his position, unless he means to say "the church had no regular plan of discipline" *before it was a church*; that a society could not be governed, edified, or improved, *before it existed*! If he does not mean this, we find, according to his own words, that immediately men united as believers in Christianity, then the Apostles who had converted them put them in order, by appointing the proper officers to regulate the things of the church, and to preserve decency and order in their assemblies; or the reverend Unitarian missionary perhaps means that the men who were com-

missioned by Jesus, and who had received power to enable them to pursue the work were not so wise as himself, who has received a mission from the Rev. R. Aspland, the Rev. W. Vidler, &c. and who is possessed of no miraculous powers—that the Apostles had no plan, no order, no discipline for their converts—while himself, in converting men to Unitarianism, pursues order and discipline, disuniting them from Calvinist churches or congregations to unite them with Unitarian priests; or perhaps the whole is intended to throw dust in the eyes of well-meaning conscientious Christians, to answer the purposes supposed in our introductory remarks.

Page 4. The Christian church is called “a self-formed society,” while in the same breath, we are told Christ said “my kingdom is not of this world”—“other foundation hath no man laid than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” As well might we say, “Salvation is of ourselves,” and immediately quote “by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

P. 5, we have a further explanation of this subject.—“Self-formed societies must be founded by the free choice of those who compose them. They were free to judge, speak, and act for themselves, in all religious matters, before they united in churches, and such a union cannot be supposed to imply an abandonment of Christian liberty, and the rights of conscience, seeing it is founded on those principles.” But we will ask this gentleman, how the Christian church can be self-formed when it was neither planned or formed by man, but by the wonderful power of God, exercised in a miraculous way? Jesus instructed his disciples forty days in the things pertaining to his kingdom, and no man, however religious he may profess to be, can be a Christian, unless he is a subject of that kingdom. “God so loved the world, that he sent his well-beloved son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” *Forgiveness of sins that were past* was proclaimed as the free gift of a merciful Creator, on condition that the man who embraced this offer of pardon forsook his sins, and believing the gospel, practised every duty therein inculcated. But how was a man to learn his duty? Not from the New Testament, for that did not exist; not from occasionally hearing the Apostles proclaim the resurrection; *but by uniting to the church*—by becoming one in the family of God—which was evidently intended as the *depository of the facts and duties belonging to Christianity*—a school in which the man was to be trained to virtue with the hope of immortality—the uniting with which was not left to the option of the man wishing to become a Christian, as he could not obey the precepts of Christianity without thus uniting—“As if thy brother offend thee,” &c. (Matt. xviii.) or “exhort one another, admonish one another, watch



over each other," &c. In short, the church is not "self-formed," but is, by the kindness of God, founded necessarily on the doctrines of Jesus, and as such emphatically called "the church of God."

But we are told "they were free to judge, speak, and act, for themselves in all religious matters, before they united in churches; and such an union cannot be supposed to imply an abandonment of Christian liberty." Of *Christian liberty*, as opposed to *Christian fellowship*, we know nothing, except from the book before us, where we are told (page 5), "unless the principles of Christian liberty be understood and acted upon, it is not likely that church will be formed according to Gospel purity and simplicity." We then read of discipline without order, and officers without authority, cantingly interwoven by observing, "to submit to any authority but that of Christ, in religious matters, is an act of disobedience to him," though the writer must well know that to "submit to the authority of Christ" implies obedience to his precepts and doctrines, and that this cannot be done out of the church or even in the church, unless *order and discipline* be preserved. That members of a church have a right to judge and think for themselves in religious matters we allow; but that they have a right to act we deny, because the whole body is affected by the actions of the members that compose it. If one member perform a wrong action, the whole body suffers: hence the propriety of "watching over each other lest a brother be overtaken in a fault." Suppose, in the present day, a member of the Freethinking Christian church should think good might be done by the anti-Christian practice of pulpit preaching; so far will his thought do no harm. But suppose he should practise, or by his actions support, that which his brethren thought the very bane of Christianity, would not this be "a house divided against itself?" Would it not become the duty of that Christian church to cut off the palsied limb, lest it should destroy the body? Thus, though a man is free to act previous to joining a Christian society, he must, when united to that society, act in connection with, and agreeable to, the nature of that institution.

The reverend gentleman, in speaking concerning the officers of the church, observes "it is the duty of churches, if it be in their power, so to provide for their ministers as to keep them free from the entanglements of worldly business." Oh priests! priests! will ye always pervert the truth! We call on him to produce a single instance from the primitive churches as an example for such an appointment. We know, and the Unitarian missionary knows, that the very nature of a Christian church would be destroyed by such a practice; but if this writer can persuade the conscientious, though ignorant, Christian, that the religion of Jesus is so dark or difficult, that the

man who attempts to instruct ought not to be "entangled with worldly concerns," his point is gained—exhortation, admonition, and instruction, cease to be the reciprocal duty of Christians; of course *that society* which is founded on the necessity of such practices becomes useless. If he can by cunning duplicity, or perversion, persuade men to this, then a congregation of good men and bad men, of virtuous and vicious characters, will be regarded as a Christian church, and they will perform their duty by supporting every schoolmaster, tailor, or weaver, who, too lazy to work, wishes to be hired as their minister, and to become "free from the entanglements of worldly business." We further observe the craft of this writer, who, while he endeavours to ease Christians of every duty which tended mutually to their benefit, and that could not by any perversion put a single penny into the priest's pocket, in his "general conclusions," is particularly careful to guard his expressions, by observing, "No person who professeth faith in Christ, unless he evidently hold the truth in unrighteousness, ought to be denied access to the Lord's table, or any other privilege of a Christian church;" as though the writer had said to his fellow-labourers, "For God's sake, turn no man away, if you can get anything by him."

But what are these great privileges to which Christians, who are not "*evidently immoral*," are to have access? Is it the privilege of partaking at the hands of a "minister, freed from the entanglements of worldly business," a bit of bread and a sip of wine, by paying ten times the value of it? Is it the privilege of doing what is nowhere commanded to be done—the privilege of performing what has not a single moral advantage to recommend it; but which only tends to perpetuate the power of the priest, by damping the energy of the mind, in substituting external ceremonies in the place of justice, mercy, and truth? Now if none but "*evidently immoral*" Christians are to be denied what this gentleman is pleased to call the duties and privileges of a Christian church—if a teacher is to be set up in that church, and if it is the duty of that church to maintain him as a gentleman—if that church consists of all who attend to hear this exalted individual—if the "congregation and church are identical"—then all who attend at Essex-street, at Hackney, or at the chapel in Parliament-court, are good Christians—yea all who assemble at "the tavern feasts," for the promotion of Christianity, though they shall laugh poor Gisborne to scorn, when he speaks of suffering for the cause of Christianity!

On this subject we will make no further remarks, but by referring every man to our introductory remarks, and to the pamphlet itself, leave Christians to form an estimate of the intention of the book, and the character of the author.



## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**HE subject on which I am about to treat having been handled in so masterly a manner by your correspondent "Philo Veritas," I almost despaired of having any thing more to add, by way of making still more evident to every one, who would exercise those faculties with which God has endowed man, that the bread and wine ceremony, falsely called the Lord's Supper, has neither Scripture nor reason to support it. However, as my ideas on this subject were not primarily conceived in consequence of looking over the pages of your Magazine, though they have been much strengthened thereby, a few remarks, arising chiefly from an examination of those passages of Scripture on which this mystery of all mysteries is generally founded, may not be altogether useless.

In the first place, I maintain that merely eating a morsel of bread, and sipping a little wine, is no where in Scripture called the Lord's Supper, which I will endeavour to prove: it is therefore derogatory to the glory of God, and a perversion of holy writ, so to call it. It is nothing more than an ecclesiastical supper, palmed upon mankind as an institution of Jesus, by the cunning craftiness of priests in ages that are past. This supper, like many other ecclesiastical absurdities, is observed at the noon time of day, forsooth, a few hours after breakfast; and most hours in the afternoon. Some eat of it once in their lives, to jump into a good thing even under a Protestant government; some on the verge of an eternal world as a passport to heaven; some three times a year, some once a month, some once a week; and some in the church to which I lately belonged, maintain that any member of it, if so disposed, may observe this ceremony, not only every first day of the week at the general assembly, but every day, and every hour in the day, without the presence of elders; also by individuals alone, being absent from the church, or any member thereof, as one affirmed he was in the habit of doing when on a journey. So much for the time of observing this bread and wine supper; and it strikes me there is just as much Scripture for the one as the other, which, in fact, is none at all.

Were I to look into past ages, to see what holy popes and reverend parsons have made of this supper, I should be lost in a labyrinth of monstrous absurdities. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Good would it have been, if those men called reformers, when they discovered that the constituent parts of this supper had been the occasion of gross idolatry, had (as far as their influence extended) extirpated it

from off the face of the earth, as good king Hezekiah did the brazen serpent that Moses had made, because the Israelites burned incense unto it.

There are also diversities of opinion as to the right posture of body when this supper is eaten ; some take it kneeling, some sitting, and some think a reclining posture, according to eastern custom, most scriptural. A particular state of mind is by most communicants held as necessary, lest, coming unworthily to the *holy table*, they eat and drink their own damnation, and actually become guilty of murder, thus delivering themselves unto Satan with a witness ; as many may suppose was the case with the Corinthians. But lest so direful an evil should take place in these latter days, some have piously put forth weekly preparations and companions to the altar, as being necessary for those who would receive the *holy sacrament* in a worthy manner. I deny that those tables, whether placed at the east end of huge buildings, called churches, or near the centre of meeting-houses, are the Lord's tables, though I have been told that when the elements of bread and wine are on those tables, they are then the Lord's. This idea savours too much of popery to be received by any whose only guide is the Scriptures of truth. Whether bread and wine, or bread and cheese, be on those tables, they are all the same, the very same parish, clergyman's, committee or trustee-men's, or perhaps some devout lady's table, used for the purpose of supporting the tottering kingdom of the clergy, or holding up systems of religion diametrically opposite to that which Jesus and his Apostles set up.

"The kingdom of God (saith Jesus) cometh not with outward shew ; neither shall they say, lo here ! or lo there ; for behold the kingdom of God is within or among you." Now it is a well known fact, that Jesus openly avowed that his kingdom was not of this world ; a decisive declaration this ; though not often thought of by gentlemen of the cloth (*black*, of course ! most happy choice, as it is correspondent with the kingdom of *darkness* to which they more or less belong). "There was one who sat at meat with Jesus said, blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God (Luke xiv. 15). And I appoint unto you (saith Jesus unto the Apostles) a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And when he took the cup at the passover supper, Jesus told them that he would no more drink of the fruit of the vine till he drank it new with them in his father's kingdom." (Matt. xvi. 29.) According to Mark, "until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God ;" and, according to Luke, "until the kingdom of God shall come."



I think no one will venture to say, that the table Jesus here speaks of, as being in his kingdom, &c. refers to any table used for a sacramental purpose; that point being gained is all I now aim at. Had it been otherwise, he (who for wisdom said he was greater than Solomon) would no doubt have given some directions to his Apostles, during the space of three years residence among them, about his table, whether it was to be of wood or of stone, the dimensions thereof, its length, breadth, and depth specified; whether to be placed in St. Peter's at Rome, or in St. Paul's at London; and if more than one was to be allowed, how many, and a race of priests appointed to officiate at the said table or tables. But not a word is mentioned in all the apostolic writings of any such table, either with or without bread and wine thereon, as being the Lord's in particular. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," I readily admit.

Now the only acknowledged table of the Lord, in Scripture, was that in the temple of Jerusalem; this was worthy to be so called, because made according to the express command of God, for an express purpose: it was nevertheless, contemptible in the estimation of those priests, who offered polluted bread on it in the days of Malachi the prophet, though they still called it the table of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul evidently refers to this table when he makes mention of the Lord's table in 1 Cor. x. 21, from the tenor of the whole chapter, the only place where the words are to be found. Jesus also refers to the table of the Lord in the temple, when he speaks of bringing gifts to the altar; not a sacramental table, as many believe in the present day, and was generally so agreed on by the ancient fathers.

What now shall be done for a table, seeing that of the Lord's at Jerusalem has been long ago destroyed by the Romans, and the Lord God in heaven has not ordained another in its stead; nor did Jesus while on earth; nor has he since he rose from the dead given any intimation that any other table should be made? I therefore assert that those tables in common use for ecclesiastical purposes are falsely called the Lord's tables. These being overthrown, it follows of course that all that is upon them fall to the ground, and likewise the services of officiating priests may be dispensed with.

Upon examining the four accounts in Scripture of the supposed institution of what is falsely called the Lord's Supper, the testimony of those two Apostles who were present on the occasion ought, in my opinion, to have the greatest weight in every unbiassed mind. Matthew was one; he simply states, that "as they were eating (the passover supper) Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples. and

said, take eat, this is my body ; and he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins." Now as to Jesus taking bread and the cup, and giving thanks to God, this was nothing more than the usual practice of the master of every Jewish family on the like occasion, and is still the practice of Jews to this day. The word *it* (in italics) occurs three times in the 26th verse, common version, but as I read in the margin, many Greek copies have *gave thanks*, I reject the word ; and with that away goes the doctrine of consecrating the elements. Blessing bread, and giving thanks to God, are two different things.

Why this translation is not more uniform and correct, the following extract from the preface may afford some clue—"and now at last, by the mercy of God, and the continuance of our labours, it being brought unto *such conclusion, as that we have great hopes that the CHURCH OF ENGLAND shall reap good fruit thereby.*"

The beloved disciple John, who leaned on the bosom of his Lord at the passover supper, we may justly suppose would have been very careful to relate every particular concerning this supper, had Jesus intended that his disciples in all ages should observe a similar ceremony ; but not a syllable is to be found in the whole of his writings of any such intention on the part of Jesus. Yet has he been very minute in mentioning every circumstance which relates to washing his disciples' feet, adding these words, "ye call me master and lord, and ye say well ; for so I am. If then your lord and master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet ; for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." Notwithstanding the minuteness of the apostle, who was an eye witness to the transaction, and the (apparent) express enjoinment of Jesus on his disciples to practise the same, yet is this totally overlooked by the advocates for the bread and wine ceremony, excepting the Sandemanians, who hold it in sentiment, but (by the bye) never practise it, that ever I have heard. The testimony of Mark (though not present at the supper) is similar to that of Matthew. The Evangelist Luke adds the following, in addition to breaking the bread *at* supper, "this do in remembrance of me," and that Jesus likewise after supper took the cup ; Judas, who betrayed him, was present. There is no mention in either of the four accounts of any bread being broke *after* the supper, and the additional evidence of Luke adds nothing in support of the ecclesiastical supper.

Ye sacramental defenders, I appeal to your understandings, and ask you, how is it that ye hold to the one, and reject the



other with disdain, seeing the injunction to wash one another's feet is as strong, if not more so, than that to eat bread and wine? for where is the difference between "this do in remembrance of me," and "do ye as I have done to you," twice told? Is not this your answer?—the one is convenient, but the other *not quite so*. What! and is it really true, that enlightened Unitarians go crouching unto the priest to partake of a morsel of bread, and sip a little wine, arrogantly styled the Lord's Supper? Is it possible?—surely this ought not to be!

The conduct of Jesus towards his disciples at the passover supper, in washing their feet, breaking their bread, and handing to them the cup of wine (thus waiting upon them as servant of all), was no doubt to teach them a striking lesson of humility and practical usefulness, enforcing the same by his own example, as well as informing their minds of his death, shortly to take place, and the important benefits they would thereby derive. To illustrate this idea I need only mention the words of Jesus himself: it appears there was a strife among the disciples at the supper, which of them should be accounted the greatest; Jesus observing this, avails himself of the opportunity to allay their animosity, and crush their foolish pride, by doing as stated above: "for whether (said he) is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. As I have set you an example, so do ye in remembrance of me; he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve!"

The circumstance of Jesus breaking bread with the two disciples going to Emmaus has been construed as meaning a sacramental supper. There it is also stated as he *sat at meat*, he took bread and blessed; there is also lacking the cup—let him that readeth understand—the three thousand souls added to the church on the day of Pentecost, continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Great stress is laid upon this passage, merely because breaking of bread is mentioned in connection with the Apostles' doctrine, &c. but that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles actually meant any thing more than eating their meat, as explained in the 46th verse of the same chapter, can only be supported by inference; and I repeat again, "In at that door hath all superstition crept."

The Apostle Paul having come to Troas, tarried there seven days (Acts xx.), and met the disciples who came together to break bread (as it is probable they usually did) upon the first *night* (not day) of the week, unless it was a very dark and cloudy day, for there were *many lights* in the upper chambers where they were met together. Here again is the door of inference

opened, which lets in the notion of a sacramental repast ; but not so is the fact ; for after the accident which befel the young man Eutychus, Paul went up again and broke bread, and did eat, and talked a long while, even till break of day ; an evident proof that the disciples had met together on the *evening* of the past day to eat a Christian meal together. There is one more instance of breaking bread, which also decisively means eating a common meal : that of Paul and the ship's company with him (Acts xxvii. 34, 35, 36). The door of inference opened to let in any other notion must be exceeding wide indeed.

I come now to the last intrenchment of the advocates for this celebrated supper, the Apostle Paul's account of the supposed institution of it (1 Cor. xi.) ; and as if to fortify the same with invincible strength, nothing short of the Almighty power of God (bestowed in a miraculous manner on the Apostle) is called in aid, to support the idea of a sacramental supper, to be observed in all ages. So strongly is this rooted in their minds, that I for my part have observed in the controversies both with my late brethren and others, that this has been the place of rendezvous ; the conversation has almost invariably turned upon this point, whether it was about Water Baptism or the aforesaid supper : it therefore demands particular attention, *seeing it must be taken by storm*. Here then it appears, that that indefatigable searcher after truth, Dr. Priestley, sat down with all his mighty forces, viewed the fortress, and deemed it impregnable ; but the battle is not always to the strong !

It is generally, if not universally, believed, that Paul received that account of the passover supper by immediate revelation from above ; not mediately, through the testimony of the Apostles, with whom he had been conversant before he came to Corinth. The latter was no doubt the case, though with God all things are possible ; but, in this instance, it was most improbable that Paul should be made acquainted by revelation, with a circumstance so well known by all the Apostles, and by the time he saw any of them, to a great number of people. The words " I have received of (or from) the Lord " do not necessarily imply immediate revelation ; for instance, we say, I received such and such a letter or present from a friend, yet it may be, as most commonly is the case, through the hands of several persons ; and we may just as well conclude that Cain dropt from the sky, like the image which fell down from Jupiter, according to the testimony of the town clerk at Ephesus ; for on the first appearance of Cain upon the earth, Eve positively said " I have gotten a man *from* the Lord," as to believe that Paul received that account by *immediate* revelation from the Lord.

Paul was one of those who were delegated by the Apostles



and elders, with the whole church assembled at Jerusalem, to deliver certain decrees or ordinances to the different churches in every city through which they were to pass. Paul, after being at Athens, came to Corinth (A. D. 54) where he abode one year and six months, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians, many of whom believed his testimony concerning Jesus, and the resurrection. (Acts xviii.) About three years after he left Corinth, he wrote an epistle or letter to the church of God in that city, wherein he praises his brethren for remembering him in all things, and for keeping the ordinances as they were delivered unto them by himself (1 Cor. xi. 2). Now that this was not the case with what he calls the Lord's Supper, or feast, is evident; for he could not praise them for the manner in which they ate and drank that Supper when met together, nor does he call it an ordinance at all, not doing after the manner Jesus did at the Passover Supper as an example: the account of which he had aforetime delivered unto them. "For as often (adds the Apostle) as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the (purport of the) Lord's death till he come." What was the design of the Lord's death, but to reconcile sinners unto God, and to one another? Thus to form of all nations one united band, eminently shewn forth when Christians meet together, and eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, for they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the household of God. And in what respect did the Corinthians fail of eating the Lord's Supper, and shewing forth his death, the Apostle tells us in verse 21—"for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is thirsty. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another, and if any man hunger (so that he cannot tarry for his brethren) let him eat at home: that ye come not together unto condemnation." It is not at all probable, nay scarcely possible, for the church of God at Corinth to have so corrupted and so totally changed a supper (so called) consisting merely of a morsel of bread and wine, to a feast of gluttony and wine bibbing, in the short space of three years, if so long, during the absence of Paul, and especially as we find he resided eighteen months in that city (verse 11), during which time they must have had the constant example, and all necessary instruction, respecting such a bread and wine ceremony, had such really existed. So firmly must it have been impressed on their minds, as not to be so very soon effaced, if at all as long as they lived. Besides, during the interval of Paul's leaving that city, and his writing the first epistle to the church, allowing it to be three full years, which is the very utmost, they had at least Apollos and Cephas with them, who were noted men of old—men of

renown and valiant for the truth. These, during their stay in the same city, must have kept a watchful eye over such (as some suppose) sacred ordinance, and given the alarm long before it could possibly have been so corrupted. Silas and Timotheus were also at Corinth during the residence of Paul in that city, and it does not appear that they left the place when the Apostle did (Acts xviii. 5, 18); but how long they staid cannot be ascertained.

It is not surprising that some in the church at Corinth, considering the different characters of which it was composed, converted Jews and Gentiles, should manifest a particular partiality towards those who preached unto them the Gospel. Some, wiser than the rest, claimed no other name than that of Christ; nor is it more surprising that there should have crept in some irregularity at the feast or supper of the Lord, or of love or charity; that they are all one in Scripture is evident. The rich in that church became (as is too often the case) rather too high-minded as Christians—they were regardless of, or had forgot, the precept and example of Jesus, of Paul, and others who had been with them, that if any would be chief let him be as he that doth serve; instead of which one takes before the other his own supper, to the shame and confusion of the poor, who had no houses to call their own. The Apostle was grieved at their conduct, and tells them that by so doing they could not eat the Lord's Supper\*.

\* As for verses 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, of 1 Cor. xi. I reject them as base forgeries, and as such consign them to the shades below. There can scarce be a doubt but that they were first created in some celebrated parson factory, and blazoned abroad by the trumpets of priests, to impose on the credulity of unthinking multitudes; they not merely smell of popery, but are altogether repugnant to the revealed character of God, and the whole tenor of scripture given by his inspiration. I will only mention one striking instance: take a view of Jesus extended on the cross, bound and nailed hand and foot, by those murderers who shed his most innocent blood; behold him in the agonies of his cruel death, uttering forth a prayer to God for his real murderers—"Father (cries Jesus), forgive them for they know not what they do." But Oh! ye unmerciful priests (and certain others also I am sorry to say; once my brethren, who ought to have known better), ye consign unto Satan, to damnation, and death, all those who believe it not necessary to partake of the bread ye have broke, nor to drink of the wine ye have poured. Not so was the conduct of Jesus and his Apostles towards those who committed vast greater crimes than this; if a crime it could be proved.

I will here acknowledge, for the encouragement of "Philo Veritas," that he was the first I ever knew who disputed the above-named six verses; but not being willing to reject any part of divine revelation, as is generally believed to be such, on the mere statement of any man, without proper examination for myself, I devoted much attention to them during the space of six months; the result of which has been as you see above. And do indeed enlightened Unitarians make use of such a *cun-*



I did think, Mr. Editor, of retiring into winter quarters at this advanced season of the year, after having bombarded at least, if not finally reduced, the last entrenchment of the enemy; but as the Philistines are again come down in order to fight it out on the plain, I will therefore muster all the forces entrusted to my care, consisting of native troops but lately trained to arms, and some ancient pieces of artillery formerly made use of by Jesus and his apostles. Now as I am conscious that the commander in chief, and his noble captain Paul, are on my side, with such help as this, victory must be certain, and the enemy beaten clean off the field of battle. O, thou stripling, is there no mention made in holy writ of eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ? Yes, verily there is, for without Jesus and the resurrection we should be of all men the most miserable. The Apostle Paul speaks of it in 1 Cor. x. 16; and, as if particularly anxious not to be misunderstood, he first says "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup and the bread of which we (Christians) partake, is it not the communion of the body and blood of Christ? not such as ye, my brethren after the flesh, partook of at your passover suppers before ye believed in Jesus: such outward ceremonies and ordinances of divine service ye well know belong to the old covenant, but concerning those under the new covenant it is written—The just shall live by faith; for we, though many (some of all nations), are one loaf, one body in Christ: for we are all partakers (by faith) of that one bread" (Christ) 17.

Paul (1 Cor. v. 8) speaks of keeping a feast with the unleavened *bread of sincerity and truth*. I once heard a sacramental sermon preached by a doctor of divinity from that text, but I think no man whose mind had not been corrupted by the priest,

*ningly devised fable* in support of an ecclesiastical institution, presumptuously called the Lord's Supper? surely I must be mistaken!

I shall now add the motley catalogue of horribles contained in those few verses: there is the heinous sin of murder—the worst ever known upon the earth—that of shedding most innocent blood, a being guilty of the body and blood of Christ—there is a dreadful fear and terror instilled into the mind of man, lest he should become thus guilty in consequence of eating a little bit of bread and wine (said to be holy) in a certain unworthy manner, and for want of a certain discernment, which the poor trembling soul can neither see nor comprehend—there is eating and drinking damnation to himself on the same account—and there is weakness of body, sickness, and death—nor is this all, there is self-examination as well as self-judgment must be performed, if not, some other judgment is denounced upon his devoted head—the chastisement of the Lord; and if this last sore scourge is not inflicted, condemnation with the world awaits the unhappy man or woman. Behold! here are a few of the blessings bestowed upon mankind through the cunning craftiness of priests; and if any man, whether bond or free, receive such sayings as the true sayings of God, let him receive them, and by all means salute the pope's toe!

would have discovered any analogy between Paul's words and the bread used at a ceremonial supper. As you must recollect, Sir, the cause of my being delivered unto Satan, you may safely conclude that I am not now under the intoxicating influence of the priestly notion of the body and blood of Christ being communicated through the fingers of clergymen; and that to have communion, or to partake thereof, one must necessarily come to their *holy board*, and partake of their *holy supper*; neither according to the apparent idea of my late brethren, that I must eat a little bit of bread and wine, though alone by myself.

Jesus spoke largely on the subject about a twelvemonth before he suffered, to which I will now direct your attention (John iv). He there calls himself the bread of God (v. 33), the living bread which came down from heaven, and that whosoever eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, hath eternal life, and he would raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed (ver. 54, 55). Now to believe for a moment that Jesus means his human flesh and blood would be next to insanity; nor do I think it a whit better to believe the popish notion of consecrated bread and wine being this flesh and blood. Protestants in general believe, that by eating a little morsel of bread and wine from the hand of the priest, after his blessing, it is somehow communicated to them, unless they happen to eat and drink *unworthily*, in which case they are liable to premature death and judgment; but by keeping close to the words which Jesus spake, none of these things do appear. Himself explains the figurative language he makes use of over and over again in the very same chapter—"verily, verily, I say unto you (saith Jesus), he that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life, shall never hunger nor thirst, and I will raise him up at the last day;" see also John iii. 16, 17. So that according to the testimony of Jesus and Paul, it is by *faith alone* that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ.

Where are we now to look for scripture precept or example for an ecclesiastical institution of bread and wine? Alas! not to be found. Here then is discovered the *key of heaven* so much talked of as belonging to the see of Rome: howbeit every priest keeps one of the *same stamp*, for his sole and separate use; for, saith the clergy, as you must eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, to have eternal life—and as this inestimable blessing is communicated to man through the medium of bread and wine, which we bless—the distribution thereof is committed unto *us* his ministers, and *us only*; therefore, as saith the Lord, unless ye eat and drink thereof, ye must *perish everlastingly*. They hold this firm, like a bone



within the jaws of a greedy dog—let any man, friend or foe, try to dispossess them of this their key, or bone of contention, see if they will not bite, and if possible rend him in pieces.

I remain, &c.

Stoke Newington, Jan. 1812.

W. C.

\*\*\*\*\*

REMARKS ON THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

A Writer in your Magazine, who calls himself "Christophilus," attaches, in my opinion, a vast deal too much weight and operation to his arguments on the side of Christianity.

To me he appears to have said nothing, which had not been said a thousand times before; and certainly, I would add (with his permission), quite as well. His last effort, in particular, is no way distinguished, except by an air of superciliousness, not, perhaps, eminently fitted to disarm and soften an adversary. Is it possible that this gentleman can be aware of the serious and formidable objections that have been urged against that particular system of belief which professes to be a divine revelation? Has he never read for himself the works of Gibbon, Voltaire, Hume, or Bolingbroke? And if he has, where is the candour, where is the decency, of calling *such objections* "silly and ridiculous?"

I despise and abhor, as much as "Christophilus" can do, the abusive and miserable publications of Paine: still I would do him justice: some of his arguments, I fear, it is not in the abilities of a Christophilus to shake. For my own part, I am not an enemy to the Christian religion: some of its doctrines appear to me just and sublime; and many of its precepts are, beyond all doubt, salutary and beneficial. If I reject its pretensions to divinity, it is upon a general principle, and not from any fixed or rooted antipathy to the system itself. It is absolutely necessary to erect a standard against superstition somewhere, or to surrender to it at discretion: and, for this purpose, the *stability of the laws of nature* affords an elevated and commanding post; a station, from which future philosophers will be able, if not to destroy the forces of the priesthood, at least to keep them everlastingly at bay.

As to the *facts* which your correspondent so exultingly refers to, they are all either easily accounted for on principles common to our nature, or such as lose themselves in some of those rare and extraordinary combinations of events and circumstances, which the revolution of numberless ages can hardly be expected to repeat.

Gibbon has most satisfactorily explained the causes, by the operation of which Christianity spread with such unexampled rapidity, through the vast extent of the Roman empire. And with regard to the condition of the Jews, it is by no means difficult to trace, with great accuracy and precision, the effects of the Mosaic constitution upon their sentiments, customs, manners—upon every thing in short which has distinguished and marked the posterity of Abraham through a long range of vicissitudes, certainly the most singular. Ask a modern enthusiast, to give you the history of his conversion; he will give you a marvellous account of what he calls the dealings of the spirit; of the dreams, and doubts, and terrors, and illuminations. Read the Jewish history, or, indeed, the history of any barbarous people, and every page is crowded with supernatural events; and all as well attested, as any of the public transactions of those times. And what have we to oppose to all this? Shall we believe it? That is not possible. Shall we reject it? O, but it is supported by testimony. In truth, nothing can be done, at this distance of time, but appealing to the common sense of mankind, and the invariable course of nature.

The reasonableness of believing in a fact, which contravenes the settled laws of the world, is, after all, unquestionably, the grand, fundamental, leading matter of discussion. If Christophilus is equal to this, he may yet render the cause of revelation no inconsiderable service.

Your's, &c.

February 7, 1812.

A DEIST.

---

ON THE RESURRECTION.

---

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

A CORRESPONDENT, in your last number, who signs himself G. G. F. says, on the subject of the resurrection, "man is a being compounded of body and ideas, and feelings are dependant upon the body." Without going into the question at present, whether those ideas and feelings, or as Mr. Hume has termed them, ideas and impressions, be material, or otherwise, I should be glad to be informed, how, if man be compounded of body and ideas and feelings alone, those ideas and feelings are perceived and compared?—They must, I apprehend, upon this hypothesis, either perceive themselves; that is, sounds must perceive sounds, odours perceive odours, &c. or sounds must perceive odours, odours perceive tastes, &c. The ideas and feelings too of touch must compare themselves with those of sight, with those of hearing, &c.

What Hallet has said, and which I recollect to have read



some years since in Priestley's "Letter to a Philosophical Unbeliever," I think, amounts to no more than that such was his opinion; another in similar circumstances might have drawn a different conclusion.

If there be no such thing as identity (Cooper has made the same assertion), and upon G. G. F.'s hypothesis, there certainly is not, the term *resurrection* is improper, and *new creation* more applicable to that act by which those future beings will be called into existence. But I would ask, how are we at all interested in the fate of those beings? What is their happiness or misery to us? And how can they be made to suffer punishment, having committed no crime, and standing in need of no reformation? To use the words of the celebrated antagonist of Priestley, "the truth is, if this system could be established, the promise of the resurrection would lose its whole importance, since it would be a mere prediction concerning a future race of men, and would be no promise to any men now existing."

G. G. F. asks, will the resurrection ever take place? If he be a Christian, and I presume he is, how can he doubt it? Has not Jesus said it? Was it not one great purpose of his mission to assure us that it would take place? It is indeed a question of faith, and involved in mystery; so is his own resurrection, the resurrection of Lazarus, and the other miracles. But do we on those accounts refuse our credence? No; because it is founded upon evidence, as strong and as conclusive, when examined fairly and without prepossession, as any we possess for our ordinary matters of belief.

Your's, &c.

Feb. 8, 1812.

A CHRISTIAN.

\*\*\*\*\*

CURSORY REMARKS ON THE COMMUNICATIONS OF "A DEIST," &c. RELATING PRINCIPALLY TO THE DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE, AND ITS SUPPOSED EXERTION IN THE INSTANCE OF REVELATION.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

THE grand question between Christianity and Deism appears to have scarcely ever received a candid and public discussion; but your Magazine presenting at this moment an opportunity for its meeting with such, it is most sincerely to be hoped, that it will not be neglected by those who have abilities and honesty enough for the task. Your correspondents, "A Deist," on the one hand, and "Christophilus," on the other, will, I trust, bring to a fair and determinate issue, a question, which is of so much importance in itself, and on the merits of which, they each of them seem so capable of deciding. Luckily, their mode of warfare appears different from that which

has hitherto almost invariably been pursued by the contending parties. The Deist in question, unlike those who have generally assumed the name, appears to despise the petty system of warfare, and predatory incursion, which has so long annoyed the defenders of Christianity, without bringing the question at all the nearer to a decision; whilst Christophilus, on the other hand, abandoning the vast extent of country, with which priestcraft and superstition had encircled the church, and which, by extending the frontiers and dividing the forces, had only served to weaken what it was intended to defend, has posted himself in the strong, and the, I trust, impregnable fortress of primitive Christianity. Still, however, the parties seem unwilling to commence the combat, or rather each has offered battle upon terms, which the other has not hitherto chosen to accept. But the difference between those terms, or the manner in which they respectively wish the general question to be discussed, appearing to be rather nominal than otherwise, it shall be my business to endeavour to bring them nearer to each other. Should I succeed in this attempt, my trouble will be most amply rewarded; and should I fail, it will be but that trouble, and your readers' time, thrown away, as the general question will still remain precisely as it was before.

Preparatory, therefore, to my entering on this part of the subject, permit me first to make a few observations on what the Deist has at different periods advanced, with regard to the question of a particular providence, as exerted in the instance of revealed religion. The subject is, indeed, stale, and has been perhaps too frequently discussed to admit of anything new being advanced with regard to it. The Deist has, however, appealed against the force of this objection, and we may the more readily concede the point to him, as we may possibly have occasion to refuse to himself the same summary species of reply. Your correspondent\* has very correctly defined a particular providence to be—the occasional departure from the operation of stated laws in nature; and afterwards says that the truth of that doctrine, thus explained, is “inconsistent with the natural perfections of the Deity, contradicted by the analogy of the material and moral worlds, and stands in direct opposition to every appearance in nature, whilst it is supported and upheld by none.” Now the force of these arguments, and the correctness of these conclusions, I do most fully and unhesitatingly allow. It will remain to the bigotted defender of the useless or interested miracles of the Roman church, and the infatuated follower of a Huntingdon, or a Southcott, to combat, and deny them. But how does this at all affect the



reality of revelation, which is not only in perfect consonance with those sentiments and conclusions, but has been itself the express and only means of establishing their truth, and communicating them to man? And even were it otherwise, and these discoveries had been made independent of a revelation, which every one must know was not the case, how for instance let me ask, can it be said to be "inconsistent with the natural perfections of the Deity," that he should confer the means of virtue, and consequent happiness, on the creature he had formed, and that he should not leave him exposed to all the evils of which the want of moral discipline, and the knowledge of good and evil, is known to be so eminently productive? or with what appearance of truth can it be affirmed to be so directly in "opposition to every appearance in nature," and so completely at variance with the "analogy of the material and moral worlds," that the animal man should be placed under circumstances, and acted upon in a manner, expressly suited to his intended situation, and his physical abilities? or that there should be prepared for such a creature, the only one possessed of ratiocinative powers, a system of instruction addressed to the mind and the understanding, instead of being derived from the mere circulation of particles, or the blind impulse of unreasoning instinct, as in the vegetable and brute creations? And such a system is said to be supported by no one principle or appearance in nature. There are however some few principles and appearances presenting themselves in a most indisputable manner through the whole discoverable universe, to which it would appear to bear some degree of analogy. A few such have been already referred to, and they may, perhaps, be more distinctly defined—as, first, the appearance of a benevolent intention on the part of the Deity towards the various creatures he has formed, and the innumerable beings he has called into existence; and, secondly, the appearance of his wisdom, everywhere displayed, which, always adapting causes to effects, and means to the end intended to be produced, has invariably acted upon the forms, the instincts, and the senses of his creatures, whether animate or otherwise, by means, and under modifications, expressly adapted to their various and distinctive organs of perception.

And can then an appeal from the Almighty to the mind and understanding of man, a revelation of his will, a display of his wisdom, and a disclosure of his unbounded beneficence, be deemed an appearance "inconsistent with the natural perfections of the Deity, contradicted by the analogy of the material and moral worlds, and in direct opposition to every appearance in nature, whilst it is supported, and upheld by none?" Shall we say this, or shall we not rather say that revelation, so far

from being the arbitrary interference of a particular providence, is, as it must appear to every reflecting mind to be, a part, and that too a part of no trifling degree of importance, in the various and well-arranged system of laws which govern the physical and moral worlds? for it will, on the slightest degree of consideration of the subject, most plainly appear, that so far from interfering with the certainty of occurrences, or the correctness of human conclusions, by clashing with the other laws which govern the universe, it has in reality been the express means of giving stability to events, and impressing the stamp of certainty on opinions, which, though of unrivalled importance to the human race, could be obtained by no other possible method.

Your correspondent has affirmed, that the instability of the laws of nature "levels with the dust the loftiest superstructure of natural and moral philosophy." Granted—and for that reason, I shall willingly concede to him the whole string of witches, sorcerers, devils, priests, conjurors and astrologers, the whole aggregated mass of enchantments, transformations, visitations, wonder-working relics, and gold-creating crucibles, that have imposed on the ignorance and superstition of mankind, in every age, and in every country of the globe. At the present day it would indeed be superlatively ridiculous to give the smallest degree of credence to these antiquated and nearly exploded fables; but whilst we are thus proud of our acquirements, and ready, at all times, to avail ourselves of improvements in knowledge and in science, is it reasonable that we should be wholly unmindful of the source from whence these advantages have been derived? And there can, I think, be little doubt on every candid and well-informed mind, that that source is revelation—for it is from revelation, and the improved state of civilization and enlightenment, which have been its peculiar and inseparable companions, that we alone have learned, that the laws of nature, both in the physical and moral worlds, are regular in their course and uniform in their operation, equally free from the absurd interference of mankind, and the malicious domination of an evil principle; conferring certainty on the experiments of the philosopher, and ensuring happiness to the well-founded speculations of the moralist—by revelation it is, that we have been enabled to discard, as ridiculous and absurd, the belief in a plurality of gods, subject in themselves to change, and continually reduced to the necessity of "altering, repairing, and improving," the creation they had formed, and the beings they had called into existence; whilst, above all, by revelation, and *by that alone*, have we discovered, what scarcely ever previously entered into the puny brain of man to conceive, that there is but



one God, who made heaven and earth, and all that is therein—whose nature is unchangeable—whose will is immutable—the same yesterday, to day, and for ever—whose fiat first called matter into existence, and endowed mind with the powers of perception and enjoyment—who, in short, to use the beautiful and appropriate expressions of your correspondent, has “devised a plan, at once compendious and exact, that directing at the same time the movements of an angel, and the transformations of a butterfly, fills the mind with sentiments of grandeur and elevation, and unequivocally bespeaks a God.”\* That this God is peculiarly, and indeed, the God of revelation, must, I think, appear self-evident to every one at all acquainted with the subject; for there exists not a nation, or a people, nay scarcely an individual, who, ignorant of such interference on the part of the Deity, does not consider the laws of nature as mutable and uncertain, and whose idea of the framers of those laws, does not include at once every thing that is “meddling, mean, and disreputable.”†

But man, it is said, and said too, on the authority of Dr. Johnson,‡ is not possessed “of such virtues, or such vices, as to be singled out for supernatural favours or afflictions.” Now, indeed, individually, and as the Doctor expresses it, “as one atom of the mass of humanity,” he certainly is not so; and on that account, no one will believe, for instance, that General Washington appeared in the senate-house of America twelve years after his decease, and burial: but this can in no manner be deemed to apply to the case of revelation, and its attendant circumstances; for there, it is the welfare and happiness, not exclusively of one atom, but generally of the whole mass of humanity, that is in question; and if it be objected that man is too insignificant, even collectively, to be the object of such interference, it may with justice be observed in reply, that one of the grand purposes of the laws of nature (i. e. as far as they relate to the globe we inhabit, for let it be remembered the general laws of the universe are wholly out of the question)—I say one of the grand purposes of nature, is the promotion of the happiness, and the formation of the mind of man; for with regard to this world, man must be considered as an object of extensive and primary importance. Any novel or additional exertion, therefore, of the powers of nature, which appears eminently calculated for the improvement and amelioration of his condition must, so far from being considered as an infringement, be regarded as, in fact, a strict fulfilment of one of the principal purposes for which those powers were called into existence. What then is revelation and its attendant circumstances, but a part of the great whole?—one, as it were, of the innumerable

\* Vol. i. page 410. † Ibid. ‡ Vol. i. page 411.

properties which we are every day discovering lying dormant and unsuspected in the creation, but which, when once achieved, we seize with ardour, and bless the benevolent power, that, occasionally departing from the common-place routine of nature, has added yet one more to the prolific springs of human happiness. The phenomena the thing presents, it is true, are singular ; but they are important—its properties are peculiar, but then they are essential to its very being, and their existence unnecessary in other instances. And shall man reject the blessing, because never conferred by other means, or pronounce that contrary to nature, which it is plain his ignorance alone has rendered remarkable ? As well might the mariner deny to the needle its polarity, because the property is not possessed by the mast and by the rudder, or return the loadstone to the earth, upon the plea that its removal was contrary to the express and undeviating laws of nature, which evidently formed and placed it ever to remain there.

But the Deist asks, and he says he asks with great submission, "where the advocates of religion gained their intelligence, as to the intentions of the Deity with regard to the disclosures alluded to?"\* Where (let me ask, in turn) do we gain our intelligence of the intentions of the Deity with regard to the material creation ? The cases, it is true, are not similar, but they are strictly analogous—we judge in both of the intention from the effect, and reasoning upwards from effect to cause, alike in both cases we attribute the phenomena to the interference of an all-wise and omnipotent God. The mode of proof, and the nature of the evidence, it is also true, are different ; but that is a necessary consequence of a difference in the thing to be proved, and the fact to be substantiated. When our senses inform us, that man is a material being, do we doubt his being a rational one also, because his rationality is not, like his form, rendered visible to the eye and tangible to the touch ? And yet this, or something very like it, is the mode of reasoning adopted by your correspondent, who says, that † "we know nothing of God, or his plans of present and future administration, except from the *visible* marks of the creation." And this, besides, is neither more nor less, than begging the question in dispute, which simply is, whether we really do not know more than he is thus pleased to define as the extent of our knowledge, and whether, by means of certain remarkable events, such as the resurrection of Jesus, &c. the Almighty has not left the marks of his benign and benevolent interference as fully and visibly impressed on the mind of man, as on the inanimate creation by which he has been pleased to surround him ; and the probability that this is really the case, will perhaps



be somewhat heightened, when we take into consideration what your correspondent has so justly termed, “the essential attributes of God, and the analogy which is everywhere conspicuous between the natural and the moral worlds.”\* When the question, therefore, is one of moral interference and endowment, as is the case in the instance of revelation, we must not refuse to listen to the evidence, because it is not similar to that which embraces the every-day-occurrences of the physical world.

Revealed religion may indeed be regarded as a species of mental creation, and its history and phenomena have been detailed at length by Christophilus in your Magazine, where he has distinctly called upon those who deny the divinity of its origin, to suggest any other adequate cause for its extent and existence, than that which he has himself assigned. He has hitherto called in vain—no one has yet attempted to subvert the truth of the premises he has laid down, or deny the justness of the conclusions which he has, with such an appearance of fairness, deduced from them.

The “Deist,” indeed, has, on a former occasion,† dismissed the general subject in a very abrupt and decisive manner, by saying, that “we should do well to fix our attention immediately on the ordinary course of events, and to discard as fabulous and incredible every story which implies a state of the world, and an order of things, essentially different from the present.”

Now it unluckily happens, that as “a Deist,” and a “disclaimer of the notion that the world is eternal,”‡ he necessarily must believe an occurrence “contrary to the ordinary course of events, and an order of things essentially different from the present;” for he must believe, that there was a time when man, together with the globe which he inhabits, did not exist, and must give credit to an actual interference on the part of the Deity, in order to their being called into existence, and rendered subject to those laws, the “undisturbed and regular operation” of which he is so eager to contend for, and I am so ready to allow. These are things not of every-day-occurrence, and which may perhaps in some degree tend to bear Mr. Teulon out in his observation, “that if the laws of nature are stable, he must believe, that the past and future order of things have been, and will be, essentially different from the present.” It is in fact the *Atheist* alone, and the *defender* of “the notion that the world is eternal,” who can, with any degree of plausibility, attempt to support the absolutely undisturbed and regular operation of the laws of nature; and the Christian, in believing that the Deity exercised a peculiar interference for the institution of revealed religion, is not a whit more cre-

\* Vol. i. page 410.

† Vol. i. p. 403.

‡ Vol. ii. p. 65.

dulous than is the Deist, when he gives credit to a similar interference for the purposes of the physical creation. The usual and common course of nature is, indeed, in both instances departed from ; but these very deviations may, in fact, be but the actual fulfilment of the general laws of the universe—at any rate, of this at least we may rest well assured, that they are in perfect conformity to the will of that all-wise and omnipotent being, who has made each the vehicle of unbounded beneficence to his creatures, and even caused the apparent errors, and real deviations from the general laws of his creation, to teem with fresh bounties and unexampled benefits to the human race—causing virtue to spring from the consequences of indulgence in crimes, and conferring religion, with all its attendant and invaluable blessings, on mankind, by those very means which man has ignorantly dared to consider as inconsistent with his wisdom, and at variance with the plans he has laid down for his conduct.

“From seeming evil still educing good,  
And better thence again—and better still,  
In infinite progression.”

I have now, Sir, ventured to lay before you my sentiments on the subject in question. To yourself—to your correspondent, “A Deist”—and to your readers in general, no apology can be necessary, except perhaps for the want of ability with which the undertaking has been executed—in every other point of view, as the attainment of truth is your object, and discussion the means which you have adopted for the arrival at it, you will not consider the communications of any one who wishes to assist you in your researches, as misplaced or intrusive. Under that impression I sat down to address you, and with similar feelings, and every wish for success in your arduous enterprise, now beg leave to subscribe myself, Your's, &c.

JUVENIS.

\*\*\*\*\*

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF YORK—THE ARCH-BISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND—AND E. K. FORDHAM, ESQ.

Who builds a church to God and not to fame,  
Will never grace the marble with his name.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**I**T is a strange world we live in, and we frequently find the strangest combinations of men of different character, interest, and principle, united to promote one common cause, and all acting from motives as opposite as the northern and



southern poles. I was led to these reflections from the characters named above, all professing to act together for the purpose of promoting Christianity—his Royal Highness *undoubtedly* from the most disinterested motives, as every one must allow; for what interest can he have in promoting the knowledge of Christianity?—he has issued orders to the army of a most pious nature, and particularly enjoins that the children of soldiers shall be instructed very early to say their Catechism, to repeat the Lord's Prayer, and to learn the graces before and after meat. I don't know that he has enjoined the fathers to say grace before they enter on the bloody work of the field of battle, though I think a good one might be extracted from our fast-day forms of prayer, especially if they would admit of this little addition—"Oh! Lord, we are of the same flesh and blood as those we are going to fight, but as we are more pure, more holy, and more pious than they are, and as our rulers are so just and humane as never to command us to slay our fellow men but in a righteous cause, we beseech thee to sharpen our swords, strengthen our arms in using them, and direct our bullets, that none of these our (and of course thine) enemies, may escape the field of slaughter! And may the punishment thus inflicted not rest here, but extend to their widows and orphans, and may they feel all that poignant anguish which such wretches deserve, who oppose our invariably religious cause! All we ask, oh thou God of love and mercy, is in the name, and as the disciples, of the meek and merciful Jesus, who by thy direction has commanded us to love our enemies and to do good for evil. Amen."

It does my heart good to see soldiers pious, but much more his Royal Highness, who, having been so grievous a sinner, by thus acting gives the most infallible proofs of repentance and conversion, as it can only have arisen from a conviction that the calamities which the nation now suffers, and the danger the church is now in, have originated from those grievous sins and iniquities of which his have formed a part, and he is now determined to "redeem the time, because the days are evil."

I did not observe (but it must have been an oversight) that he particularly recommended an attention to the 5th and 10th commandments—Thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife—as it is natural for the man who sees the folly of any particular line of conduct he has been pursuing to be very tenacious in guarding others from the same. This reformation of his Royal Highness I must presume, or he certainly would not be meddling with religion; for a conduct more vile, base, and detestable, cannot be conceived, than that of a man enforcing the duties of religion upon others, while he himself is living in open violation of all its laws.

Archbishops, bishops, and clergy, have now awakened to a sense of the danger that threatens—religion! or, their establishment. They have seen an obscure individual do that which they are paid so much to perform, viz. instruct the people; and, oh! dreadful! teach them to read and write without teaching them the church catechism. They fear that they will read the Bible without this bias; and of course they think, or one would suppose they thought, that nobody could read the Bible without being a dissenter from their church. However they determine to make the best of a bad bargain; and if the people *must* learn to read, why they will take care to make it as little injurious to their craft as possible. They therefore call all the rich, the ignorant, and the bigotted, to their aid, and determine to make the article of reading of as little use as possible, by excluding all from their instructions who will not be educated in the principles of the church of England—thus polluting the pure fountain of education with their defiled and bitter waters.

In support of this contracted and bigotted purpose, a Mr. D. whose father was a Dissenter, and a very pious man—so pious that the meanest servant in the house must fear the Lord; and who, if I am not misinformed, as a proof of his humanity and piety, advertised for a porter that feared the Lord, and could carry 500 cwt.—I say a son of this man moved in the Common Council, that £500 should be given in support of this system of making education useless; but to the honor of that court, they were too wise and too liberal to sanction such intolerance. And I trust every liberal-minded churchman, but particularly every Dissenter, will set his face against such an impious fraud.

The clergy of the church must naturally feel alarmed—they know how tottering it stands, and that it wants but an universal spread of knowledge to blow its dust to the four corners of heaven; but when I see Dissenters, *especially Unitarians*, from whatever motive they may act, at any time, but more particularly the present, joining themselves with such men in any way to support their craft, my mind is filled with indignation and contempt. Judge then of my surprise, when reading the advertisement of the Hertford meeting for distributing Bibles of the *present version only, without note or comment*, evidently for the same purpose of supporting the church, to see the name of E. K. Fordham, esq. taking so conspicuous a part as to move a vote of thanks on the occasion. Surely he must be not only a conspicuous, but a very active man in this business. But there are some men who must be publishing their name and virtues to the world; and whether it is a show of cattle, or a show of Bibles, it matters not—their zeal and enthusiasm

are the same, so that their names and consequence can but be published to the world.

But who is E. K. Fordham, esq. ? if I am not misinformed, a Unitarian, one who no doubt has given his support to an improved version, because the old was calculated to lead men into gross errors—one who believes that the present version is not only incorrect in its translation, but that it has in it the grossest forgeries of the most indecent and immoral nature, calculated to support a system of idolatry and superstition ; and yet *he* joins with churchmen in distributing this book *without note or comment*. Surely one would have expected from common conscience, common honesty, or common principle, instead of moving a vote of thanks, he would have made a speech on the occasion that the world might have had *his note or comment*, his warning voice *at least*, to guard them against those parts which he thinks to be false ; but not a word about this does he utter. Indeed we read that he moved the vote of thanks—that he is an esquire—of course that he is rich. How hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ! But perhaps he thought that the distribution of the Bible, corrupted as it is, would make pupils for him or for the Unitarians : if he did so, all experience must convince him of his mistake. Wherever the present version has gone, without note or comment, it has made pupils for methodism or the established church, but none for rational Christianity ; and I have invariably found, that it is much more difficult to make converts to rational religion, of those who have read the present version, without note or comment, than of those who have never read the Bible at all.

But the church is in danger, and this will help to prop it up ; for which they ought to move a vote of thanks to E. K. F. esq. and those inconsistent Unitarians who, like him, are weak or blind enough to join in the same unprincipled undertaking. If he is so anxious to do good, let him do it consistently. We cannot but judge of a man by the company he keeps. Even if E. K. F. thought that good would result from the distribution of Bibles, he ought not to have joined with men who act from such different motives. The Apostle Paul, though he rejoiced that Christ was preached, even of contention and strife, never countenanced the persons who did it, but exhibited them in their proper colours, as deceivers, and ministers of the adversary ; but, unlike Paul, E. K. F. never exposes or complains of their motives, but becomes the conspicuous mover of a vote of thanks—so would not Jesus—so would not Paul—and so ought not any honest, enlightened, and consistent Unitarian. It is by such men as E. K. F. that rational religion is brought into disgrace and contempt ; and though the light



may not be put under a bushel, it is so mixt with darkness, rubbish, and confusion, that it will reflect no light at all. Thus are all these characters conspiring, though with the most discordant motives, to keep up the age of ignorance, darkness, and superstition; and when it should seem from passing events, that God has laid his hand upon the tottering fabric of the church, these men are holding out their feeble arms to support the falling fabric. "Come out of her, Oh! my people (says Jehovah), that ye be not partakers of her sins, or of her plagues;" and shall rational Christians do any thing to support what God has threatened to destroy, and over which destruction he has called his people to rejoice—for that in one hour destruction shall come upon her?

It may be possible that E. K. F. may have acted on the principle of preponderating utility; but where is his criterion? who made him a judge in this matter? The Christian's rule is, do right, and leave heaven to answer for the rest. Paul has declared that we must not do evil that good may come—that evil communications corrupt good manners, and that we should avoid the very appearance of evil. It is the Deity alone who can, from seeming evil, be still educating good; because by his omniscience he can embrace the mighty whole, and form his plans upon a certainty. Weak as we are, and contracted as is our knowledge of effects, the line of our duty is prescribed—we must do only that which is strictly true, strictly just, strictly good and consistent, and avoid every thing that is contrary to these rules.

In the hope that E. K. F. may see this, and be convinced of his error,

I remain, your's, &c.

A FRIEND TO CONSISTENCY.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ON A REVELATION.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**I**N answer to the queries of W. I. I have only to say, that *there never was a revelation*, because mankind are not agreed about that which is the true revelation; there are many religions which pretend to that title, and there are millions of men who differ about them. Now a revelation of the will of God (having first *proved* what God is) must be clear and intelligible to all the world, or there can be no infallible criterion of such a revelation. And considering that of the small portion of mankind who believe in the Christian revelation, not one million agree to understand it in the same sense, it follows inevitably, that it cannot come from heaven: if there

never has been a revelation, the presumption is so strong as to be almost undeniable that there never will be one.

As to the *direct and positive* evidences of Christianity, I know not what they are. I allow that it contains many good moral precepts ; so do the writings of the heathen philosophers, and the books of the Apocrypha. I remain, &c.

Welbeck Street, Feb. 2, 1812.

W. BURDON.

\*\*\*\*\*

ANSWER TO THE COMMUNICATIONS OF A DEIST, ON THE STABILITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE, AS OPPOSED TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**HE enquiry, whether the present is or is not the only stage of our existence, is so interesting in its nature, and important in its consequences, as to require no apology for my adding another to the list of your correspondents on that subject.

The doctrine of the resurrection, like every other of consequence to mankind, has had its friends and its foes ; and it must be confessed, that much frivolous argument has been advanced, as well in support of, as in opposition to, its truth. To confirm a favourite system, or to invalidate an obnoxious one, we are too apt to press in arguments which are either unnecessary or inadmissible. The enthusiasm of system is the most dangerous of enthusiasms—it swallows up every thing—it confounds the most palpable distinctions, and unites the most opposite extremes—it transmutes whatever it comes in contact with, not like the touch of Midas into gold, but into dross—it makes all nature subservient to its own fanciful designs, and there is nothing so remote but what may be associated with the utmost facility to its darling theory, from the falling of a leaf to the appearance of a comet.

These reflections are occasioned by a perusal of the controversy between your correspondent, who signs himself “ a Deist,” and Mr. Teulon. Your Christian friend, in his zeal to serve the cause of revelation, finds the proofs of the resurrection of man in grasses and orange trees, in lizards and spiders skins, in the shells and claws of lobsters, and in the tails of salamanders ; whilst “ a Deist” rejects altogether the belief of a future state, in opposition to the testimony of the most virtuous and disinterested of men, who lived as eye-witnesses, and died as martyrs to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, merely because it does not happen to agree with certain notions of his own about the laws of nature.

I can readily believe, Mr. Editor, that the motives of the contending parties are equally laudable—the one supports what he believes to be true, the other opposes what he imagines to be false. Perhaps nothing does so much injury to a good cause, as the attempt to support it by weak and erroneous principles; for if the controversialist cannot feel the force of a *strong* argument adduced by his opponent, he can very readily detect the fallacy of a *weak* one: and it is on this account I have been extremely sorry to see Mr. Teulon place the doctrine of the resurrection on so slippery and untenable a foundation, for as far as I can understand his system, he has completely committed the important question: and it is not surprising that “a Deist” should have been able to avail himself with considerable success of the incautious mode of defence adopted by Mr. T. though it is worthy remark, that of the regular and compleat body of evidence brought together in the papers signed “Christophilus,” the writer has taken no notice, but has preferred to fall on the weak—to engage in unimportant skirmishes, and to waste his strength in insignificant controversies about rainbows and uninhabited islands. On those subjects, as well as in commenting on Mr. Teulon’s hypothesis (for such it must be called, as it is not the hypothesis of the New Testament), it is but justice to say that he has evinced much judgment, much ingenuity, and no small degree of candour; but even if we were to admit that he has been successful in proving his antagonist in the wrong, it will not follow as a consequence, I presume, that he himself is in the right.

As all the communications of the writer bear upon one point, “the stability of the laws of nature,” it is my intention to offer a few observations on that subject, in connection with the resurrection of man. I proceed to my task with becoming diffidence—it will be necessary to take back the attention of my readers to the Magazine for December last (page 506), as in that we find the foundation of all his reasoning. In commenting on Mr. Teulon’s opinions, he begins by stating the point at issue to be “the stability of the laws of nature,” and proceeds to lay down the following proposition as the groundwork of his argument—“that there is not sufficient reason to believe that from the creation to this day the laws of nature have in a single instance been disturbed, and that to raise a man absolutely dead from the grave strictly involves such a disturbance.”

Now, Mr. Editor, it would have simplified the subject considerably, as well as have communicated much information to your readers, if the writer had first let them know *what the laws of nature are*. I am surprised that it never occurred to that clearness of perception which he possesses in so eminent a degree, that unless the laws of nature are previously defined,



it is impossible to say what is or is not a disturbance of them—the position is self-evident. And further, though philosophy may boast of having settled some of the laws of nature, yet as long as there exists in nature a single law with whose operations we are unacquainted, so long we must be incapable of ascertaining what phenomena manifestly involve a disturbance of the laws of nature; because the very effect which may appear contrary to the order of nature may be produced physically by the unknown law. For, as Rousseau has somewhere observed, “it might be in the power of one unknown law in certain cases to change the effects of such as were known;” so that it may be true, that “there is nothing in the *usual course* of nature which bears the most distant analogy to the supposed resurrection of the human person.” Nay, the course of nature may appear to be against such a presumption, and yet it may be perfectly in unison with some ultimate principle in nature, which the penetrating eye of philosophy has never been able to discover. Whether the raising a man absolutely dead from the grave strictly involves a disturbance of the laws of nature, I cannot pretend to determine, till the laws of nature are made known. If I play at billiards, or at chess, and my adversary accuses me of making a move contrary to the laws of the game, it is for him to state or to produce the laws, and we proceed immediately to judge of the supposed deviation; and so, Mr. Editor, when your correspondent produces the laws of nature (and by the laws of nature I mean *the whole of the laws of nature, and nothing but the laws of nature*), then if we can discover no principle which has any affinity to the resurrection of man, I shall conclude, not that the thing is impossible, but that nature cannot accomplish it without the immediate power and interference of NATURE’S GOD; and I have yet to learn that there is anything unworthy in the end proposed of such power and interference. The question would then resolve itself into this—has the Deity held out any ground of hope to man beyond the grave? I think he has.

For a list of the laws of nature, I shall look with some anxiety in the next letter of your correspondent; without them I cannot join issue with him, for who would attempt to draw conclusions from unknown premises? Concerning the laws of nature, I blush not to own my ignorance—myself but an atom of one grand and comprehensive system, I do not pretend to comprehend the principles by which the world is governed, of which I form so insignificant a part.

“And lives the man, whose universal eye  
Has swept at once the unbounded scheme of things;  
Mark’d their dependance so, and firm accord,  
As with unfalt’ring accent to conclude  
*That these are Nature’s laws?*”

Yes! "a Deist" is the man; and whilst he persists in opposing "the stability of the laws of nature" to the truths of revealed religion, I shall persist in calling on him to develope those laws, considering all besides as "mere empty declamation, mere plausible rant."\*

In support of his position, your correspondent proceeds to lay down certain preliminaries, with which he expects the Christian will agree—(1st) "That we know nothing of the attributes and intentions of Deity, except from the visible creation." I confess, Sir, I am at a loss to account for the rashness of "a Deist," in supposing that any believer in revelation could be so silly as to assent to this proposition as a preliminary to the discussion—it is really preposterous, when the Christian contends that the Deity *has* revealed himself to man in an extraordinary way, and that all we know of his attributes and intentions *is from revelation*, that he should be expected to concede the very point in dispute—that he should be coolly asked to agree with the Deist on the identical point where they most essentially differ. To talk of this position as a *preliminary* is absurd, for grant what it requires and the controversy is at an end—the whole accumulated evidence of Christianity is swept away in less than two lines. How ridiculous would this writer reckon the Christian who should say to him, let us see if we cannot agree to a few preliminaries, and then propose as the first—that we know nothing of the attributes and intentions of the Deity except from *revelation*!

The fact is, Mr. Editor, your correspondent has assumed what he ought to prove; and as the whole of his argument, together with his after propositions, rest on that assumption, they can pass for nothing till it is proved. For myself, I wish to know what "the visible creation" does teach concerning the attributes and intentions of the Deity, and I trust "a Deist" will not be above instructing me; I trust he will make it appear, that in proportion as nations have been less enlightened by revelation, their conceptions have been more simple, more rational, and more comprehensive "of the attributes and intentions of the Deity."

The two concluding positions, or "*axioms*," as the writer is pleased to call them, deserve notice. The sixth runs thus—"that in the early ages of the world, when men as yet were unacquainted with the properties of matter, and the settled order of events, it was perfectly natural for them to refer every uncom-

\* It is readily granted to the writer, that it does not follow "that because there are some things which we do not know, therefore it is impossible to examine and arrive at certainty concerning the things that we really do know;" but the fallacy of his reasoning is this, that it professes to arrive at certainty concerning the things that we really do not know.



mon appearance to supernatural interference and agency ; and that consequently the judgment and testimony of such men are but of little value." But how does this apply to lessen the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus ? The Apostles were unacquainted with the properties of matter, therefore their judgment and testimony is of little value. I shall expect next to hear, that because Paul was "unacquainted with the properties of matter," therefore he was incapable of ascertaining whether he was let down the wall of Damascus in a basket : it may be my ignorance of the "properties of matter," which makes me incapable of seeing the logic of the conclusion. It is admitted, that in the infancy of science men are often disposed to mistake the causes of events purely natural, or as the writer expresses it, to "refer every uncommon appearance to supernatural interposition and agency ;" but the first point to be settled is, *did such uncommon appearances exist* ; that is, did Jesus rise from the dead ? According to the construction of the proposition, the phenomenon is admitted, though the supposed cause is disallowed. The disciples attribute this uncommon appearance to supernatural interference and agency ; they believed that Jesus was raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. The Deist allows of nothing but what is consistent with the properties of matter, and the settled order of events. Are the two suppositions necessarily at variance with each other ? I have sometimes presumed to conjecture that in reality they are not, but never had I dared to hope to arrive at any thing like certainty in this respect. I had feared that the times in which we live were not sufficiently advanced in the day of science to illumine so dark, so mysterious a subject, and that a perfect knowledge of the profound arcanum of nature was reserved for the future discoveries of unborn ages ; but when "a Deist," in his next, shall have revealed to us the LAWS OF NATURE, all my doubts, will be dissipated ; hypothesis and conjecture will give place to conviction and certainty, and we may possibly find that revelation itself forms but a part of one grand and comprehensive system, holding in its extended grasp the past, the present, and the future order of things—blending the simple with the stupendous—impelling an eternity with the event of a moment—connecting the remarkable phenomenon with the ordinary occurrence, and bringing from laws equally immutable, a world from chaos, or a man from the grave. To the rapid improvement of modern philosophy and modern Deism we shall be indebted for this sudden influx of information.

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night,  
God said, let SCEPTICS\* be! and all was light."

\* It is presumed no reader can object to the substitution of the word SCEPTICS for the name of NEWTON ; particularly when it is remembered



But when the judgment and testimony of the witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus are attempted to be invalidated, merely because they lived before the "properties of matter, and the settled order of events," were understood, I can scarcely admit even the plausibility of the objection; for was not the eye, as capable of seeing, and the ear of hearing, in the apostolic age, as in the present? Shall I be reckoned credulous, when I assert that I think Peter or John were as competent to determine whether they saw and conversed with Jesus or not, after his resurrection, as Mr. Paine, or the author of the objection, would be of any fact which passed under their observation, and the truth of which they were appointed to witness, notwithstanding their familiar acquaintance with the "properties of matter," "the laws of nature," and "the settled order of events?" Alas! for the poor fishermen of Galilee, they knew not what such fine things meant!

You will perceive, Mr. Editor, that the last proposition is, like the first, a round unsupported assertion—(7th) "that no human testimony is of sufficient authority to establish a fact manifestly inconsistent with the usual course of events." Now the resurrection of Jesus, whether it is or is not contrary to the laws of nature, is admitted to be "manifestly inconsistent with the usual course of events," and the Christian believes it on the express authority of human testimony; yet, strange to say, before he can reason with "a Deist," he is modestly asked to give up the only authority on which he rests the system about which they are to dispute. The conditions on which this writer proposes to argue are all in his own favour; and here Mr. Teulon was justified in not acceding to them, for, as he well observed, "it would be having nothing to contend for." And though "a Deist" feels so confident in his irrefragable position as to repeat it in his next letter, and to tell us that it strikes his own "mind with all the energy of a first principle," yet this can only serve to show how differently our minds are constituted; for to my mind there is nothing striking whatsoever in the position—except its weakness. Setting revelation or miracles aside, I could not judge of many other events that have happened in the world by such a principle.

The "usual course of events" can only be determined by our knowledge and experience, and we may possibly make erroneous calculations as to what appears "manifestly inconsistent with the usual course of events." How many discoveries have there been made in philosophy which our forefathers would have considered "inconsistent with the usual course of events?" and does not the chemist often meet with phenomena that Newton knew so little of the laws of nature as to believe in Christianity!

nia which he is unable to reconcile to those general laws by which nature is supposed to be governed? The fact is, that events are only esteemed remarkable, or contrary to nature, as long as the causes by which they are produced remain unknown. Printing was at one time esteemed contrary to the usual course of events, and the man who should then have asserted that he had seen a hundred copies of the Bible produced in a hundredth part of the time which was usually taken to finish one, ought not to have been believed on any human testimony whatever, according to the principle of the objection. The navigator who merely calculated an eclipse was considered to have performed a something contrary to the usual course of nature, and by that means saved his life. But to try this infallible axiom in its application, let us suppose that one of our modern Aeronauts should tell a party of Indians that in England he had frequently seated himself in a convenient vehicle, ascended from the earth, pierced the clouds, and travelled through the air with the utmost safety—they would listen to him with wondering credulity, but I might imagine one of their Sages, profoundly learned, and deeply skilled in the study of nature, to rise up and address the narrator—What you have told us, European, of your travels through the air is as wonderful as the stories of most other travellers; but the point at issue between us is, the stability of the laws of nature. I choose to state the question generally, as being the least invidious and startling—let us try your story by a few plain truths. There is not sufficient reason to believe that from the beginning of the world to this day the laws of nature have in a single instance been disturbed; but for a man to raise himself from earth to heaven, strictly involves such a disturbance. In our own times, at least, the laws of the world are absolutely fixed, and their operations quite uniform and steady. There is no instance whatever, within the range of our observation, in which a single individual, either black or white, has been known to float in the air as you describe, consequently there is nothing in the usual course of nature which bears the most distant analogy to the supposed ascension of the human person. As far back as our tradition will carry us, the course of nature appears to have been uniformly constant; but with regard to those instances alleged to have been exceptions to this rule (for we have heard of old women in the country from which you came taking an evening's ride round the sky on a broomstick) the greater number of them are notoriously forged; and with regard to the rest, a violent presumption necessarily arises against their truth. It is in vain then, European, that you swear by the gods of your country—it is in vain that you offer your companions as living witnesses—for the judgment and



testimony of men unacquainted with the settled order of events are but of little value ; and no human testimony whatever is of sufficient authority to establish a fact manifestly inconsistent with the usual course of events. These principles appear to me as firm as the rocks—as immovable as the mountains—go then to your own country, sail through the waters or the clouds as fast as you please, and amuse a people who will be more ready to listen to you.

After all, Mr. Editor, the position of your correspondent appears to me utterly inconclusive ; for even if we were to admit the inference to be just, which is a matter of dispute, yet the premises are evidently founded in our ignorance of the course of events, and the general operations of nature.

The objection of a Deist is not new, for it was the objection of an Apostle—Thomas thought no human testimony of sufficient authority to establish the fact of the resurrection of Jesus—Thomas lived long enough to change his opinion—and it is with pleasure I think I address myself to one who will not be above following his example upon fair conviction.

It was my intention at this time to have noticed the paper on “the stability of the laws of nature,” in the number for last month, but as I have already trespassed on your pages to a much greater length than I had intended, I shall claim your indulgence in a future paper ; hoping the importance of the subject, and the acumen of your correspondent, will be considered a sufficient excuse for the present. Your’s, &c.

*Blackfriars Road.*

W. C.

---

## EXTRACT FROM A PORT-FOLIO.

*Consistency of the Editor of the Encyclopædia Britannica in his explanation of the words TRINITY and ABSURD.*

“*Trinity*, in theology, the ineffable mystery of *three* persons in *one* God.”

“*Absurd*, an epithet applied to any thing that is contrary to human apprehension, and contradicts a manifest truth. Thus it would be absurd to say, that 6 and 6 make only 10 ; or to deny, that twice 6 make 12. When the term *absurd* is applied to actions it has the same import as *ridiculous*.”—And why not when applied to doctrines as well as actions ? and, if equally applicable to one as the other, he has proved his ineffable mystery of three persons in one God to be not only absurd but ridiculous. But why did he not say that it would be absurd to assert that 3 ones, or 2 and 1, make only 1 ; or to deny that 3 ones, or 2 and 1, make 3 ? The answer is obvious, because it would have been so completely applicable to his doctrine of the trinity, “that the Father is God, the son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not *three* Gods but *one* God,” that it must have made it evident to every rational man that it could not be true, and that it was highly absurd and ridiculous altogether.